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President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: The first speaker is His Excellency Mr. Amdemicael Kahsai, Chairman of the delegation of Eritrea, on whom I now call.

Mr. Kahsai (Eritrea): Allow me first to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. I wish also to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, who presided over the fiftieth regular session of the General Assembly.

The Assembly will agree with me that present-day international relations are characterized by two contradictory trends. On the one hand, there is an overriding desire and wilful movement to enhance international cooperation through the expansion of trade and investment. This trend is inextricably linked to the pursuit and maintenance of peace and stability. However, parallel with and contradicting this positive trend, we see a proliferation of high- and low-intensity conflicts in various corners of the world triggered by different causes. The pursuit of viable mechanisms to reduce and seek a permanent solution to these conflicts in order to promote international cooperation for the welfare of mankind remains, therefore, the key challenge that the United Nations will continue to face in the coming years.

The Horn of Africa region remains, likewise, in the grips of this dichotomy. On the positive side, the countries of the region are committed to promoting regional cooperation, and continue to make strenuous efforts to this end. This is indeed manifested by the substantial progress achieved to date to revitalize the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD), the regional instrument for achieving this objective. At the same time, the region continues to bleed due to grave internal conflicts within some member States. The painful bloodletting that has destroyed the social fabric in Somalia continues unabated; the internal conflict in the Sudan and the climate of regional tension created by the activities of the National Islamic Front (NIF) regime continues to deteriorate.

The pursuit of peace and stability, with the attendant opportunities that this provides for economic and social development, have special significance for peoples that have suffered the physical and psychological traumas of war. In this connection, as the Assembly is aware, my country has borne the brunt of a long war which has exacted enormous human sacrifices, leaving its economic and social infrastructure a shambles. Accordingly, peace is crucial to the young State of Eritrea to heal the scars of war, to recoup lost opportunity and to reconstruct what has been devastated.

But my Government's profound aspirations and commitment to the maintenance of peace continue to be threatened by the hostile and unprovoked acts of the NIF regime in the Sudan, whose antagonism and subversion

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against Eritrea began soon after it took power in 1989. I hardly need emphasize here that the acts of subversion and State-sponsored terrorism are not directed against Eritrea alone, but have in fact been adopted as an instrument of policy by the NIF in its attempts to destabilize its neighbours and export its expansionist designs through subversion and violence.

In pursuit of these aims, the NIF regime has propped up and provided safe haven to assorted terrorists from various countries and facilitated their acts of sabotage and terror. Khartoum's barely veiled hand is discernible from the litany of border incursions by mercenary groups in a number of countries in the region and acts of naked terror in the international arena.

I must stress here that my Government has left no stone unturned in its efforts to reduce and stave off the climate of tension provoked by the acts of the NIF regime. As a matter of fact, for five long years my Government pursued a policy of constructive engagement, patiently and tirelessly, hoping against hope that the authorities in Khartoum would turn back from the dangerous alley that they are heading for.

Unfortunately, the language of moderation and peace only whetted the NIF's appetite to spread its subversive tentacles deeper and wider. In the event, Khartoum not only refused to heed these continuous appeals, but escalated its overt acts of terror and subversion beyond limits.

Another grave matter I wish to bring to the attention of this Assembly is the maltreatment of Eritrean refugees at the hands of Sudanese authorities. The NIF regime not only is doing whatever it can to obstruct the organized repatriation of the refugees to their home country, but is engaged in reckless and deplorable acts to drive a wedge between the refugees and the people of the Sudan, who have offered commendable hospitality during the long years of war. And when this policy did not work, the NIF regime began subjecting the refugees to arbitrary imprisonment, torture, and banishment after confiscation of their property by its security authorities. Moreover, young refugees were forcibly conscripted and given military training to be deployed in subversive activities across the border. Organized repatriation of these refugees, the pilot phase of which has been successfully achieved, is impeded by the lame excuses the NIF fabricates. All these pressures have caused the refugees to return home spontaneously at high risk.

All these acts of hostility perpetrated by the NIF regime to implement its designs of destabilizing neighbours should surely be of grave concern to this Assembly and the international community at large, given their wider regional security ramifications.

Allow me further to recall the incident that erupted between Eritrea and the Republic of Yemen in December 1995, following the latter's occupation of the Eritrean archipelago of Hanish-Zuqar, at the southern entrance to the Red Sea. Perhaps due to its sensitivity, the incident aroused immediate international concern and mediation endeavours.

The Government of Eritrea, which all along had sought international arbitration to the dispute, promptly accepted, with full appreciation, the mediation initiatives of the Ethiopian and Egyptian Governments, and later that of the United Nations Secretary-General, which greatly helped to defuse tensions and paved the way for the peaceful handling of the dispute. When facilitation by the French Government was proposed, the Eritrean Government accepted it wholeheartedly.

These decisions were taken by the Eritrean Government against a background of mendacious accusations and irresponsible campaigns by the Yemeni authorities to escalate the situation. The incident was also fanned by those in certain quarters who sought to serve their vested interests in the troubled waters. However, genuine desires and a sincere political will prevailed.

Ultimately, restraint and careful handling of the issue, in addition to positive and constructive regional and international intervention, culminated in the Agreement on Principles, signed by both parties on 21 May 1996 in Paris.

In this Agreement, both the State of Eritrea and the Republic of Yemen unequivocally expressed their desire to settle their dispute over the Hanish-Zuqar archipelago by the verdict of a court of arbitration. Developments since the signing of the document could be considered generally positive and encouraging. However, allegations were made by the Republic of Yemen that Eritrean forces occupied the island of Lesser Hanish on 10 August 1996, and the matter was hastily referred to the Security Council. The fact of the matter was that units of the Eritrean forces were on that island both before and after the signing of the Agreement on Principles on 21 May 1996. Despite this truth, the Eritrean Government withdrew its forces as a gesture of goodwill and in the

interest of the smooth progress of the arbitration process and to preserve and promote the peace of the region.

The Eritrean Government has time and again affirmed its adherence to the Agreement on Principles of 21 May 1996, and expressed its commitment to abide by the decisions of the court of arbitration. I am pleased to underline that the subsidiary agreement reached between the two sides in Paris last week, on 3 October, will now allow for the proceedings of the court of arbitration to start early next year.

The agonizing and intractable reality in Somalia cannot but impel the international community to search for ways and means of expediting an end to this long, drawn-out tragedy. The complexity of the situation is too apparent to require more elaboration here. But it is clear that no amount of well-meaning external support will succeed in restoring normalcy to Somalia unless the Somalis themselves take stock of the senseless bloodshed that has torn the country apart and produce what it takes to forge peace and national reconciliation. Admittedly, the countries of the region could have played a more catalytic part in this multi-pronged effort. The lack of a consistent and coordinated regional and international initiative, however, may entail more preoccupying negative developments. Indeed, there are indications these days of a growing involvement of various external actors that seem bent on exploiting the vacuum to promote their hidden agendas. Somalia is in fact drifting towards becoming fertile ground for extremist groups. For the sake of the Somalis, and in the interest of regional peace and stability, it is vital that these trends be checked before it is too late and that the regional initiative be resuscitated.

The recent developments in the Middle East which appear to have cast some shadows on the Oslo agreement are naturally a matter of preoccupation to all those who wish to see an enduring settlement to the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Whatever the shortcomings of the agreement, there can be no alternative to the peace process. My Government therefore appeals to both sides to persevere in the process of dialogue and negotiations so that a lasting peace that ensures the well-being of all the peoples of the region will be assured.

In conclusion, we share the views of many Member States on the imperative of restructuring the decision-making bodies of the United Nations, particularly the Security Council. The Security Council continues to play a vitally important role in the maintenance of international peace and security. It is my delegation's belief that now is the opportune moment to revitalize it, make it more democratic and improve its value, effectiveness and legitimacy so as to make it reflect the universal character of the Organization. Powerful and convincing arguments have been made by many speakers to the effect that, at present, the Security Council is neither equitable nor representative. The circumstances of international politics have altered so fundamentally that there are compelling reasons for change.

In spite of the broadly shared wish for reform, discussions so far have not really come close to the general agreement needed. It is our firm belief that flexibility and compromise will be necessary. There are a number of interesting elements in the proposals, to which thorough attention should be given so that we can try to bring about the necessary change.

The President: I now call on the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, His Excellency Mr. Abdul Rahim Ghafoorzai.

Mr. Ghafoorzai (Afghanistan): At the outset, allow me, Sir, to express my delegation's congratulations upon your election to the high position of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

The Afghan trauma, which was imposed by others and endured by the Afghan people, continues to have disturbing consequences for our nation. For the world, it may be just another trouble spot. But for Afghans, it means agony, pain, loss, psychological trauma and an unknown future. We must not forget that there is still hope. It lies in the international connection between me and other representatives and, through them, to their countrymen. The United Nations was built on that dream and today, that connection is once again being made — it is the fifty-first connection.

Two tragic dates will stand out in the recent history of Afghanistan: 27 December 1979 and 27 September 1996. Both were black days that trigger bitter memories in the minds of all patriotic Afghans. The first date reminds them of the occupation by the former Soviet Union and the second, of another occupying force, backed by another neighbour.

The force occupying parts of our homeland today is known as the Taliban — a name that became very familiar to the General Assembly at the previous session.

What was the Taliban's first act when it captured Kabul? It was to attack not a military garrison, but the United Nations office in Afghanistan. Its first act was to breach the sanctity of the United Nations compound, in violation of all accepted international norms and laws.

That is the Taliban. As European Commissioner, Emma Bonino, said yesterday, the Taliban is a force that threatens to take Afghanistan back to the dark ages. Numerous international media reports from Kabul draw a picture of an organization supported from abroad, imposing a draconian system on a terrified people. The Taliban have ordered schools and universities to close and stopped all education and employment for women. There are numerous reports from the media, the United States authorities and the United Nations on the role of the Taliban in a $75 billion heroin export industry in Afghanistan.

On 1 October 1996, *The New York Times* said that the 1 million people who live in Kabul alone had been plunged into the

> "labyrinth that is Taliban rule".

On 3 October 1996 the Reuters news agency said that, while the Taliban has tried to seek international recognition, it has been greeted with "suspicion — and fear". In just their first week in Kabul, the Taliban earned the condemnation of Amnesty International.

These are not the words of the Afghan Government describing the Taliban occupation — these are the words of Amnesty International:

> "Despite statements from their leadership suggesting moderation, it is clear that Taleban guards are busily implementing a reign of terror in Kabul ... Families are afraid to go out into the streets, afraid to answer their doors, and afraid that their loved ones will suffer the brutal consequence"

of Taliban rule. Amnesty International accuses the Taliban of seizing, in house-to-house searches in the capital, up to 1,000 prisoners, who were forced to walk over the front-line minefields.

French television showed the Taliban storming into the Kabul museum, where they destroyed many artifacts, relics and statues that were unique. Those artifacts and statues belonged to the Buddhist era and are irreplaceable.

I am talking about the Taliban, which is overwhelmed by foreign-fomented hatred, mandated by a foreign-crafted agenda and committed to the annihilation of the political, social and economic fabric of Afghanistan. It is an organization whose display of terror in Kabul breaks all records. In short, the Taliban are mercenaries — an illegal and illegitimate force that has been imposed on the Afghan people.

Once again, foreign interference is the main cause of the continued conflict in Afghanistan. The current state of terror and chaos, touching the lives of every living soul in Kabul, is the direct consequence of that interference. We have at our disposal hard evidence that we will submit in due course to the Security Council for appropriate consideration. What could prove that there is foreign interference better than the foreign militias, which include some officers, who were recently captured on the battlefield by the armed forces of the Islamic State of Afghanistan?

The Islamic State of Afghanistan firmly believes that the so-called Taliban is a perfect example of a mercenary force as defined by the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries, adopted by the General Assembly in 1989. We are not denying the existence among the Taliban of Afghan youths who were raised across the border and attended religious schools there, but it cannot be stated too clearly that the main corps of the Taliban military staff consists of officers and militia forces from beyond our borders, paid by military-industrial magnates trying to overthrow the Islamic State of Afghanistan.

The United Nations General Assembly, on 21 December 1995, adopted a resolution which condemned any State that permits or tolerates the recruitment, financing, training, assembly, transit and use of mercenaries with the objective of overthrowing the Government of any State Member of the United Nations, especially that of a developing country.

The Charter of the United Nations, in various Articles, urges all Members to develop friendly relations among themselves and to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State.

On the occasion of the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations on 24 October 1970, the General Assembly approved the

Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States. The first principle declares that States shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

The Seventh Islamic Summit Conference in Casablanca on 13 December 1994, the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Countries on 18 October of 1995 in Cartagena de Indias, the General Assembly resolution on Afghanistan of 19 December 1995 and the Twenty-third Islamic Conference of Foreign Minsters on 9 December 1995 held in Conakry, Guinea, all insist vigorously on the principle of non-intervention and respect for the territorial integrity and independence of Afghanistan and on a peace process based on genuine intra-Afghan dialogue.

It is a matter of great disappointment that persistent appeals to the United Nations made by the Islamic State of Afghanistan to send a fact-finding mission to inquire into and investigate the level, degree and nature of foreign intervention in Afghanistan remain unanswered.

Last year, we presented facts about the Taliban from this rostrum. Our plight went unheard. We are afraid, given the accounts of documented facts by the press and our clear stand on the legacy of the Taliban, that our plight might go unheard once more. That will be even more catastrophic than the Taliban take-over itself.

The latest reports, as recent as yesterday, reveal some shocking realities and facts about the Taliban attacks on the areas surrounding Kabul, the capital. Allow me to unveil the screened and concealed crime that the Taliban, assisted by their outside sponsors, committed very recently. Exactly 26 days ago, on 11 September 1996, intelligence sources of the Defence Ministry of the Islamic State of Afghanistan intercepted and recorded a Taliban radio transmission between Nangarhar and Kandahar. That transmission says the following:

> "Give regards to the victorious Mullah Shukrullah ... Tell him that new APR weapons have already been brought to Kandahar. You should immediately send these arms, which are gas weapons, through Torkhan towards Nangarhar because we have organized a group of Taliban with special gear and are waiting for the said weapons. We can capture large areas with a single round."

On 17 September, just six days later, I personally took this report, submitted to me by the Ministry of Defence, and presented it to the State Supreme Council, convened under the leadership of Mr. Rabbani, the President of Afghanistan, in Blandage bunker, just north of Kabul, the capital. I still remember an overwhelming stillness occupied the room after I submitted the report. After a brief calmness, a member of the Council remarked that maybe the report had been passed around to demoralize State troops; hence, not enough attention was paid to the issue.

Yesterday, we obtained a shocking — and I repeat, shocking — report from the headquarters of the Government in Taloqan, which reminded me of the Supreme Council meeting. Officials of the Islamic State of Afghanistan recorded radio conversations by the Taliban in the front line around evening on 26 September, the night before the Taliban take-over of Kabul. The following assurances were reported:

> "Reassure the leaders that the new weapons have had good results in Lata Band, Bande-Ghazi and Puli-Charkhi."

These areas, for the information of the representatives, are located to the east of Kabul, the capital.

More staggering realities are provided by the eyewitness reports of those who saw the areas afterwards. These eyewitnesses have reported that they saw most of the corpses of the Government troops laying on the ground without any sign of injury from a bullet or arsenal penetration in their bodies. However, they did reveal that they had noticed that the Government troops had bled from their noses, eyes and ears. Mr. Muslim, a veteran commander of the Government, who witnessed similar situations during the Soviet occupation, has remarked that:

> "The Taliban advance in the front line completely surprised me. I then realized that the Taliban must be in possession of some kind of weapons more advanced than we had seen, possessed or known."

Mr. Muslim, the commander, continues:

> "Chemical weapons hadn't crossed my mind until the evening of 26 September during the Taliban's fierce attack on Lata Band. I received a radio transmission that a large number of our men were being lost and even when I commanded the rest to retreat, I heard no reply. I contacted my headquarters. I was ordered to examine the front line. One hour had passed since my initial contact with the front line when I arrived there. Then I saw Commander Saboor, lying dead on the battle ground. I only noticed blood around his nose and ears. Saboor was a close friend of mine. Suddenly, I had a flashback of the Red Army using similar weapons during the jihad. I really wanted to take his body, which had no trace of external injury, back with me. But the intensity of fighting did not give me the chance."

Based on this account, it is the strong conviction of the Islamic State of Afghanistan that the foreign sponsors of the Taliban have provided them with some type of internationally banned gas or chemical weapon which were used in the Taliban onslaught for the capture of Kabul, the capital, where they encountered strong resistance.

We are bringing this tragic episode to the attention of this Assembly and therefore appeal to the international community immediately to assign a team of inquiry to investigate the case to which I have referred.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan has continuously provided information to the United Nations Special Mission and to the Security Council about the military acts of the Taliban, which have systematically refused to accept the United Nations peace process.

In a letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations dated 5 September 1995 (S/1995/767), the Government of Afghanistan warned the international community about the dangers of the fragmentation and disintegration of Afghanistan and of the possibility of the Taliban military advances getting out of control.

In the letter to the Secretary-General dated 14 September 1995, the Islamic State of Afghanistan forecasted

> "the outcome of this new tension as alarming and perilous"

and earnestly called for the prompt dispatching

> "of a fact-finding mission to western Afghanistan in order to report during the consultations to the Security Council". (S/1995/795, p. 2)

The Secretary-General, in a letter dated 22 September 1995, assured that,

> "The United Nations remains committed to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan and opposed to all external interference in your country. I am using the mandates entrusted to me by the Member States to do all I can to resolve the sources of conflict which contribute to instability in Afghanistan. I shall continue to pursue a comprehensive approach to the overall peace process, in which the Special Mission will continue to play the main United Nations role. I ask that you continue to cooperate with it."

In a letter dated 27 September 1995 to the Secretary-General, the Islamic State of Afghanistan stated that,

> "Taliban not only undermined peace and tranquillity in the western parts of the country, but in the meantime, posed an external practical menace to the territorial integrity of Afghanistan." *(S/1995/823, annex, p. 3)*

and that,

> "the most reasonable and practical way to peace, and appropriate atmosphere for a peaceful transfer of power to an elected authority enjoying the confidence of the people, is first and foremost the need to ease off the present 'crisis of confidence'". *(ibid.)*

In the general debate of 4 October 1995, we declared that attempts by

> "reactionary groups to destabilize a moderate Islamic system which believes in democracy and human rights, are wrong in their assessments and calculations. Such foreign circles may think that after the usurpation of power by the Taliban all will go well for them. In fact, they will add a further problem, especially by bringing onto the scene a faction which has no factual presence on Afghanistan's political scene. These circles should be aware that the peace and security in the capital, the actual relative peace and stability in the country

and in the region, would be jeopardized by such an erroneous miscalculation. The same error was made by the former Soviet Union in 1979." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 19th meeting, p. 10)*

As far as the activities of the United Nations Special Mission are concerned, we suggested, in a letter dated 30 September 1995, that the efforts of the Secretary-General

> "and those of Ambassador Mahmoud Mestiri, Head of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, would benefit from the establishment of a contact group on Afghanistan composed of States, but not the ones immediately involved, as well as of interested organizations." *(A/50/510, annex, p. 2)*

In a letter dated 12 October 1995, we warned that,

> "The different leaders of the Taliban have several times declared their rejection of the United Nations Special Mission's action in proposing to them to accept a ceasefire. They have also rejected the proposals for peace talks with other parties to the conflict." *(S/1995/866, annex, p. 2)*

In a letter dated 12 November 1995, we informed the Secretary-General that,

> "On 11 November 1995, the Taliban launched as many as 170 rockets on the civilian-populated sectors of Kabul, as a result of which 37 innocent lives were lost and more than 52 civilians wounded, while immense damage was inflicted upon public property." *(A/50/748, annex, p. 2)*

This is why in a letter dated 16 November 1995 (A/50/760) addressed to the Secretary General, the Islamic State of Afghanistan inquired about the identity of the Taliban, their ideology and goals, their rejection of the peace process and their negative attitude towards the United Nations.

As a result of the heavy bombardment of the capital by the Taliban on 26 November 1995, the Secretary-General expressed his concern about the escalation of fighting and called upon all parties to cooperate with the efforts of the United Nations Special Mission, then headed by Ambassador Mahmoud Mestiri, aimed at achieving an immediate ceasefire and promoting negotiations among the parties on a transitional mechanism for the transfer of power, to achieve a just and durable settlement acceptable to all Afghans.

During 1996 Afghanistan continued to keep the United Nations well informed about the atrocities committed by the Taliban in a letter dated 19 January 1996 (S/1996/44).

On 9 April 1996 the Security Council held two meetings on Afghanistan. During the meetings the delegation of the Islamic State of Afghanistan provided adequate information on the role of the so-called Taliban in causing turmoil in Afghanistan and threatening the peace and stability of the region. This was recognized by the Security Council in a statement to the press on 13 December 1995.

In a letter dated 22 August 1996 addressed to the Secretary General, the President of the Security Council stated that the members of Security Council,

> "express their strong view that the warring parties should renounce the use of force and settle their differences by peaceful means, through negotiations.
>
> "The members of the Security Council are convinced that the main responsibility for finding a political solution to the conflict lies with the parties and that all States must refrain from interference." *(S/1996/683, first and second paragraphs)*

The Taliban have consistently taken a rejectionist attitude and still act against the letter and the spirit of all Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and decisions.

Given this account, I must say that this is the time to look back and see who is responsible for the ongoing human tragedy in Afghanistan. Was it not the lack of any appropriate response by this Organization to the intransigent attitude of the Taliban that encouraged and enabled them to see the tunnel wide open and to pursue their designs crafted by military-industrial magnates from abroad?

The Islamic State of Afghanistan had continuously warned the United Nations about the possible outcome. Who is to blame, and could we consider it a conspiracy of indifference or a conspiracy of victimization? Regardless of which one it may be, the blood of Afghans has been spilled. One thing manifested by the indifference

thus far is that Afghan blood is not cheap; rather, it is worthless.

Let us go back to the drastic events that took place during the last couple of weeks. The Government forces evacuated the capital in order to prevent a bloodbath. The Taliban invaded Kabul on the morning of 27 September 1996. The Government authorities relocated their headquarters and offices in Taloqan, the capital of the northern province of Takhar.

Resistance against the Taliban is not limited only to the Panjshir Valley, where the Taliban are conducting widespread and extensive battles, targeting civilian areas. In many other parts of Afghanistan, under the rule of the Taliban, there exists the potential for resistance. Soon we will hear about uprisings.

In today's circumstances, the objectives of the Islamic State of Afghanistan have not changed, and I would like to emphasize once again our firm commitment to General Assembly resolution 50/88 on Afghanistan, which was adopted by consensus on 19 December 1995.

The provisional setback of one party in the conflict and the territorial gain of one side could not mean that peace would prevail in the country. Military occupation cannot bring about conflict resolution. On the contrary, the escalation of tension once again necessitates a negotiated settlement of the conflict through the mechanism formulated in operative paragraph 4 of resolution 50/88 B of 19 December 1995. This provides a solution to the crisis in Afghanistan through the United Nations peace process.

A ranking United Nations official expressed his concern by stating in *The Los Angeles Times* of 5 October 1996,

> "It's frightening [that] this is going to be the Government, because these men have obviously had no experience but fighting."

The Taliban, who have invaded the capital city of Kabul with cross-border military assistance, will not be able to ensure the national unity of Afghanistan, especially in the light of what they have done during the first days of their military rule in the capital. The Taliban, in spite of being Pashtuns, neither agree with the majority of Pashtuns of the country nor with Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Turkmen, Baluchis, Nooristanis and others.

The Afghan leaders, intellectuals and scholars cannot agree with the regressive and backward views of the Taliban. Many religious leaders of the country do not approve of their attitude and deem it incompatible with the needs of Muslims in the modern world. They all consider them unacceptable tools of foreign intervention.

The military rule of the Taliban must not be considered final or accomplished. Those foreign quarters which have provided financial and military assistance to the Taliban will not be able to subsidize and finance their rule permanently.

The Taliban are lacking any vision or ability for the objective of economic and social rehabilitation in Afghanistan. They lack any coherent and systematic thinking or projection of the vast needs of today's Afghanistan. Many of their leaders consider the teachings of modern science and technology contrary to religion. They consider science to be sacrilege. The Taliban, who still believe the earth is flat, are not the people for Afghanistan, not when we are about to enter the twenty-first century.

Yet the outside sponsors of the Taliban are attempting to cover up their actual identity and nature, thus soliciting a kind of legitimacy for this illegitimate, obscurantist and terrorist group. Any relation established with the Taliban may be interpreted by the Taliban as tolerance by the international community. Allowing this to happen would be an affront to the principles of the United Nations, a seal of approval for terrorism, a legitimization of foreign intervention and, indeed, an insult to the human conscience.

In the name of the Islamic State of Afghanistan and the victimized Afghan nation, I express gratitude to all those countries that have expressed their concern and disapproval of the occupation of the Afghan capital, Kabul, by the Taliban, and the rule of terror in that city.

Days after the occupation of Kabul, on 2 October 1996, the Coordination Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), at which I had the honour to speak, convened at the United Nations in New York. In a final communiqué, they expressed

> "the hope that the Afghan parties will peacefully resolve their political differences and collectively

work for the restoration of peace and stability in the country".

The practical solution to the Afghan problem needs to include the following elements, in conformity with General Assembly resolution 50/88 B of 19 December 1995 on the question of Afghanistan: first, an immediate cessation of armed conflict and the declaration of a ceasefire; secondly, an invitation to all Afghan parties to the negotiating table, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the cooperation of the OIC; thirdly, an agreement on the composition and establishment of a transitional Government of national unity and the creation of a credible, authoritative body to which power would immediately be transferred; and, fourthly, the consolidation of the political process in order to ascertain the views of the people and solve the problem through elections or through the convening of the traditional Grand Assembly.

Our basic views and main objectives are as follows: the re-establishment of peace and stability, along with the creation of conditions conducive to ensuring that the peoples of Afghanistan can live, in an atmosphere of law and order, on the basis of democratic values and respect for human rights, as required by an authentic and truthful vision of high Islamic principles; and the establishment of a strong central Government on the basis of agreement among all Afghan sides that have the capacity to mobilize masses and are able to secure the achievement of these goals. This will allow Afghanistan to become once again a positive factor for peace and stability in the region to which it belongs.

Only a transitional Government of national unity would be able to secure the national unity of the country and to allow the launching of the major task of reconstructing and rehabilitating Afghanistan. Such a goal could not be achieved without the full participation of the intellectuals, scientists, experts and technocrats of Afghanistan, many of whom now live abroad. We are expecting all countries that are in favour of peace and stability in Afghanistan to assist our people in order to achieve these noble objectives.

Upon adopting the Charter of the United Nations 51 years ago in the city of San Francisco, the founding fathers of this global establishment declared the United Nations to be based on the sovereign equality of all States. They did this at a time when this principle was an ideal. The struggle for freedom by many nations, together with millions of sacrifices, on the one hand, and the need in the twentieth century for natural interdependence between the members of this global family, on the other, proved more than ever the righteousness of this principle.

It is apropos in this connection to quote His Excellency Mr. Hervé de Charette, the Foreign Minister of France, who on 25 September stated from this rostrum:

> "If we are not careful, we are going to be living in a world without criteria, without values, without references, in which some — the strongest and richest — will be in a position to decide alone on the future of the planet." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 8th meeting, p. 18)*

The President: I now call on the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda, His Excellency The Honourable Eriya Kategaya.

Mr. Kategaya (Uganda): It is a pleasure and an honour for me to address this Assembly. From this lofty rostrum, the nations of the world speak to one another as members of one global community, irrespective of size and differences. The United Nations is today the best hope for a better future for humankind. What we do here must therefore contribute positively and effectively towards the achievement of the noble purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of our Organization.

Permit me, Sir, on behalf of the delegation of Uganda, to express how pleased we are at your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. Your well-deserved election is a great honour to your country, Malaysia, with which Uganda enjoys very cordial bilateral relations. I wish to pledge our full support to you, Sir, and to affirm our confidence in your ability to guide our deliberations to a successful conclusion. Allow me also to pay a special tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, for the able manner in which he presided over the work of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

I salute our Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his commitment and dedication to the global mission of the United Nations during the past five years.

The United Nations continues to be confronted with the challenge of redressing the development disparities that exist among nations, particularly between the few rich countries and the majority of impoverished ones. For

the latter, these disparities are manifest in widespread poverty and the degradation of their ecosystems. They are also a major cause of the spiral of violence and internal conflicts, with their attendant suffering and destruction.

In an increasingly interdependent world, these problems have regional as well as global consequences. It would therefore be wishful thinking to treat them as if they were a concern of only the affected countries and regions. They must be addressed through global approaches and strategies that ensure lasting solutions.

We note that present advances in transport, communications and information technology have resulted in the increasing globalization of the world economy. Both liberalization and globalization offer opportunities as well as challenges within and among nations. These twin phenomena have, in addition, deepened the marginalization of some regions, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. This process could breed further polarization within countries, with very destructive and destabilizing consequences. We wish to underscore the continuing relevance of multilateralism and international cooperation as prerequisites for equitable global growth and development and for addressing the negative consequences of globalization.

The increasing trend towards unfair trading practices and conflicts in international trade is a matter of serious concern for us. We are witnessing situations in which developing countries are pushed to open up their markets, ostensibly to advance free trade and competition, while at the same time developed countries practice managed trade and limit access to some export products from developing countries. This contradiction is unhealthy for the world economy.

The establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1994 as an entity to act as a custodian and guarantor of a rules-based multilateral trading system is a positive development. We therefore welcome the convening of the first Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization in Singapore in December 1996. The Meeting should, in our opinion, give a clear policy direction to the WTO for the next two years on measures to redress imbalances existing in the present multilateral trading system, which are to the disadvantage of many developing countries, particularly the least developed ones.

The Meeting should therefore give high priority to undertaking a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Uruguay Round agreements, with a view to adopting specific and concrete measures to obviate adverse effects to the least developed countries and net food-importing developing countries arising from the implementation of the agreements; reverse the marginalization of the least developed countries; and strengthen their capacity to compete in the global economy. These measures must include long-term financial and technical support, the transfer of technology as critical elements for the effective implementation of the Uruguay agreements and in the improvement of the trade performance of developing countries.

With regard to the proposal that the Meeting address issues outside the WTO built-in agenda, we would prefer to benefit first from the analytical advice of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development on the policy implications of such issues to international trade before they are taken up by the WTO. In our view, the Meeting should focus on issues relating to the full implementation of agreed commitments, such as the provision of financial, technical and technological support to developing countries, as well as those aimed at stemming and reversing the distortive factors to trade.

The increasing role of transnational corporations in the international trade in goods and services and in the flow of private capital has inordinately enhanced their control over resources and the transfer of technology and know-how in developing countries. In some cases, this control is beyond the capacity of many developing countries to check. As the influence of these corporations grows with globalization, there is an urgent need to elaborate and adopt an effective and legally-binding international code of conduct to regulate the activities and influence of transnational corporations.

Mr. Turnquest (Bahamas), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We are committed to subregional and regional cooperation and integration. Within the East African subregion, we have participated actively in the revival of East African cooperation, in the strengthening of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, and in intensifying efforts to make operational the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community. It is our belief that enhanced subregional and regional cooperation and integration are critical to complement South-South cooperation and international cooperation for development. It is also a means of enhancing

competitiveness and thereby improving our performance in the world economy. In efforts to further strengthen cooperation in East Africa, we propose the establishment of a cooperation arrangement between the East African Community and the United Nations. We appeal to the international community to support these efforts.

The magnitude of debt and its servicing obligations continues to impose a serious obstacle to our development efforts. As of March 1996, for example, Uganda's total external indebtedness stood at $3.2 billion — which represented 67.5 per cent of its gross domestic product — of which 75 per cent was owed to multilateral financial institutions. Debt-servicing was $141 million, or 27 per cent of export earnings. Projected debt-servicing for the 1996-1997 fiscal year is $184 million, or 35.8 per cent of export earnings. This precarious situation is compounded by the current rigorous debt-repayment enforcement regime pursued by creditor multilateral financial institutions.

Uganda is committed to fulfilling its debt obligations within the means available to it. In this regard, a multilateral debt fund has been established to offset the debt owed to the International Development Association, the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Bank's African Development Fund. We are grateful to all bilateral donors who have continued to support and make direct contributions to the fund. We also appeal to other donors to join in this worthy endeavour in order to augment the resources of the fund, which are still very low.

To complement these efforts, we make a special appeal to the international community, and particularly to the multilateral financial institutions, to adopt concrete measures to effect a drastic reduction of external indebtedness of least developed countries and other severely indebted developing countries. In this regard, we commend as a first step the debt relief initiatives currently in place, such as the Naples Terms. In our view, however, these measures remain grossly inadequate to have any meaningful impact. There is therefore a need to augment them with additional measures that substantially reduce all types of debts, including those which entail debt write-offs or converting part or all of our debt into grants.

We note with appreciation the recent measures by the Bretton Woods institutions to put in place measures for debt relief. We urge the dominant shareholders to support these measures.

African countries, including Uganda, continue to be adversely affected by record-low levels of export commodity earnings. The situation is aggravated by tariff and non-tariff barriers imposed by our trading partners on our semi-processed and processed export products and by declining terms of trade due to increased prices of imported manufactured goods and services. We urge the adoption of concrete support measures to improve our export earnings. This could include assistance in the areas of horizontal and vertical diversification of our economies, as well as capacity-building.

Today is World Habitat Day. It is a day for the international community to reflect on and reaffirm its commitment to the plight of the one billion people in all parts of the world who lack adequate shelter and basic services, such as safe water supplies and sanitation facilities. It is also a day to dedicate ourselves to the objective of finding lasting solutions to the problems of homelessness and other social ills associated with rapid urbanization.

The maintenance of international peace and security remains a formidable challenge for the United Nations. Efforts in this regard continue to be undermined by conflicts and tensions arising from inadequate political leadership that cannot correctly handle ethnic, religious and social differences in those affected areas. These have undermined the rule of law, peace and security, and have contributed to untold suffering in many of the affected countries.

In Africa, civil strife and internal conflicts, with their attendant consequences, are afflicting several countries to varying degrees. For instance, we are gravely concerned by the suffering imposed on the people of northern Uganda by renegade groups. These terrorist acts must be stopped forthwith for the sake of peace and security in our subregion.

The conflict in Burundi is a serious threat to the peace and security of that country as well as to the subregion. Uganda appeals to all the parties concerned to accept the mediation efforts of former President Julius Nyerere, which are aimed at achieving a peaceful political solution to the conflict through compromise and accommodation in the context of the Arusha initiative and peace process.

In this regard, Uganda urges all the parties concerned to resume, as a matter of urgency,

unconditional political negotiations in order to establish peace and security for all Burundians. We are committed to working closely with other countries in the subregion to find a lasting political solution to the problems of Burundi through dialogue and national reconciliation.

The steps taken by the Government of Rwanda towards the restoration of normalcy and achieving national reconciliation are steps in the right direction. These steps should be encouraged and supported, as they provide a basis for restoring mutual confidence and trust, which are critical for a peaceful return and reintegration of Rwandese refugees from neighbouring countries.

We are concerned about the chaotic situation in Somalia and call for the reinvigoration of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) peace efforts.

Common sense must prevail among the warring factions in Liberia so that the people of that unhappy country may be given a chance to enjoy peace, security and national reconciliation. We welcome the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States in this connection.

With regard to Angola, we note that the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol is under way. We encourage both parties to stay the course.

The efforts of the OAU and the Yamoussoukrou mediation efforts of President Bédié of Côte d'Ivoire to seek a peaceful solution to the conflict in Sierra Leone should be encouraged.

Uganda supports the just struggle of the Sahraoui people for self-determination. To this end, we urge the speedy resolution of the conflict in Western Sahara, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Uganda supports the efforts of the United Nations and the appropriate regional organizations to diffuse conflicts through preventive diplomacy, as well as through the mechanisms of peacekeeping and peacemaking, including dialogue and confidence-building. In this regard, we reaffirm our support for the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, as well as for its Central Organ. The Mechanism and the Central Organ should be supported and provided with the necessary resources to enable them to operate effectively.

The idea of encouraging African Member States to put in place contingent arrangements for deployment in situations requiring peacekeeping or military observer missions in Africa has merit and deserves support. At the same time, humanitarian programmes with built-in mechanisms that address the continuum from emergency relief to rehabilitation, recovery and long-term development are essential to restoring lasting peace.

We welcome the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. However, we urge the nuclear-weapon States to seize this opportunity to commit themselves to adopting concrete time- frames for the total elimination of all nuclear weapons, as well as to stopping the qualitative development and refinement of nuclear arsenals, including through computer simulation.

Most African countries have embraced and are vigorously pursuing far-reaching political and economic reforms. In Uganda, we have implemented fundamental economic reforms consistent with our development priorities and strategies and the structural adjustment programmes of the Bretton Woods institutions. We have liberalized trade and created the necessary conditions for encouraging and promoting both domestic and foreign direct investment. We have improved our economic management systems, with strong emphasis on fiscal and monetary discipline. We have endeavoured to integrate and implement the outcome of the major international conferences into our national development plans and priorities.

However, in order to nurture these positive developments and improve the well-being of our citizens, we need concerted cooperation and support from the international community by ensuring, among others, a favourable external economic environment.

I am glad to state that Uganda is a nation restored both politically and economically. Allow me to outline briefly the measures that have been taken and which are responsible for peace, security and the other positive changes that prevail in Uganda today. These positive changes are the result of a policy of reconciliation. For us, reconciliation itself is a means to an end, the end being national unity.

In pursuance of this objective, we instituted from the very beginning the principle of a broad-based Government which accommodated all shades of political opinion and ideologies. The pillar of the democratization process is

the nationwide political participation in decision-making at all levels, which has empowered people to take charge of their own governance.

Uganda remains committed to the protection and promotion of human rights. A Human Rights Commission has been established to oversee the observance of human rights in Uganda. The Commission is complemented by a national human rights unit in the Ministry of Justice and similar units will be established in the near future at the district level. We have ensured that the promotion of human rights includes a component to redress the inequality of opportunities through affirmative action in favour of disadvantaged groups such as women, youths and the disabled.

In this regard, the 1995 Constitution of Uganda provides for special representation in Parliament for these groups. We appreciate the support extended to us so far in this area and welcome further technical and financial support, especially towards the review and finalization of appropriate legislation and the strengthening of relevant human rights entities at various levels.

Last year, a new Constitution was promulgated after more than a year of intense debate by a Constituent Assembly of directly-elected members. On 9 May 1996, the first-ever free and fair presidential elections were held, followed by parliamentary elections on 27 June 1996. Today, Uganda has its first-ever directly-elected President since independence in 1962.

In Uganda, we share the view that decentralization is a necessary condition for good governance and empowerment because democracy cannot thrive unless space is given for civil society to operate. In pursuance of this, political decentralization is not only enshrined in the Constitution, but is already being implemented. Such a transfer of power to the districts and other lower tiers has removed the remoteness of government and ensured a speedier delivery of goods and services to the people.

Years of war and economic mismanagement have left Uganda with a shattered economy. The present administration has continued to make steady progress in restoring the economy under the framework of the Economic Reform Programme. Inflation has been successfully controlled since June 1992 at the level of 5.6 per cent, on average. At the same time, Uganda has enjoyed a high average rate of economic growth of 8.1 per cent due to macroeconomic stability and strict monetary policies.

Ms. Bostwick (Bahamas), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In order to attract investments, an Investment Code was instituted to ensure a friendly and conducive investment environment. The Uganda Investment Authority was established as a one-stop centre for information.

Uganda commends various initiatives taken by the United Nations to eradicate poverty. Special mention should be made of the World Social Summit, the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa. We commend this spirit of international partnership aimed at addressing persistent poverty in our region. For its part, the Government of Uganda has embarked on the long road of addressing the problem by ensuring that the fruits of economic growth reach the masses of the population. Among the strategies in place is an Action Plan for the Eradication of Poverty with a Poverty Task Force as its implementing agency. In the short and medium terms, the Action Plan focuses on increasing household income, primary education and road infrastructure. The political and economic achievements registered so far prove that a serious, visionary and committed Government can lead donor conditionalities rather than be led by them.

We have just concluded the mid-term review of the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. For the satisfactory outcome of the meeting, we wish to thank most profoundly the Government of Japan and all delegations which participated actively in this exercise. One of the fundamental conclusions of the review is that a lot remains to be done to consolidate the modest political and socio-economic progress that has been achieved in some parts of the African continent. This will require the mobilization of substantial new and additional resources and, in particular, the provision of a conducive external economic environment. The review also demonstrated that a partnership based on shared responsibility and mutuality of interest is possible and inevitable.

The United Nations remains a custodian of many cherished ideals, such as the primacy of democratic governance. The United Nations was born out of a yearning for a democratic multilateral system capable of addressing problems brought about by hideous tensions

and conflicts throughout the world, with a view to making planet Earth a more secure, just and friendly place for present and future generations. We all agree on the need to strengthen the United Nations so that it can carry out its global mandate effectively. We should therefore provide it with adequate resources. This commitment, invariably, calls upon each Member State to meet its financial obligations to the organization in full, on time and without conditions.

Within the context of strengthening the Organization, measures should be adopted to achieve its democratization at all levels. Since there is a worldwide trend towards democratization, this Organization cannot remain unaffected by these winds of change. Uganda therefore supports proposals to restructure the Security Council in order to bring transparency to its working methods, democracy to its decision-making procedures and equity to reflect the increased membership of the United Nations.

The United Nations remains, in our view, the appropriate central forum for addressing global problems confronting the international community. It must be strengthened, revitalized and democratized. This is the challenge that we the peoples of the United Nations must address as a matter of priority.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tourism and Information of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, His Excellency The Honourable Alpian R. O. Allen.

Mr. Allen (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Last year, we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations with much fanfare and glowing tributes. The organs of this body were dissected and properly examined and the findings were encouraging. The prevailing opinion is that the strengths of this institution far outweigh its weaknesses. However, we cannot be complacent. As our Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Sir James Mitchell, said when he addressed the fiftieth session:

> "Living institutions, like anything biological, need the nurture of fresh nutrients, fresh ideas. A living thing either improves or perishes." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 40th meeting, p. 49)*

Mr. Razali has assumed the presidency after the period of stock-taking and at a time when we look with renewed confidence towards the United Nations. His passion for innovation will serve him well. As he presides over this re-energized body, I wish to congratulate him on his election to the presidency. Let me take this opportunity to extend to his predecessor our best wishes and deep appreciation for the competent manner in which he presided over the last historic session.

As the twenty-first century approaches, we must ask ourselves the following questions: What of the future? Will our children survive? Will we be at peace with our fellow men?

The picture looks bleak. We are still plagued by persistent poverty, disease, hunger, environmental degradation and spiritual pollution, wanton acts of terrorism, the drug menace, domestic disturbances and regional conflicts.

There is still hope so long as we see each other as friends and neighbours rather than as competitors. If we pool our resources for the enhancement of mankind, the world will be a much better place.

We have witnessed over the past year a trail of terrorist destruction and death. In our view, all terrorists are cowards who rely on fear and destabilization to achieve their sinister ends. What triumph can there be in the murder and disfiguring of innocent people? This is obviously the product of sick minds. These faceless criminals who perform these acts, sometimes with the tacit approval of authority, have no place in the community of nations.

My delegation is calling for another conference to deal with the root causes of terrorism. Such a conference must involve this entire body so that the views of small and mighty nations on the matter can be expressed. As the new century approaches, our children must be able to play in public parks without having to look over their shoulders. When we travel, we must be able to view the passengers next to us as new-found friends rather than potential executioners.

Why do we continue to stockpile weapons of mass destruction? The aim of these weapons is to kill. Killing human beings should not be regarded as a sport. Life will always be man's most treasured possession. In our peaceful region, we are strangers to the world of such deadly arsenals and will continue to denounce their use. We are delighted to be associated with the passage of the Australian resolution on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Any step, however small, towards the curbing

of the arms race and the eventual elimination of weapons must be viewed as positive.

One of the most formidable challenges of our time is the protection of the environment. The threats which confront us are daunting; global warming, desertification and deforestation are among the many. Environmental protection is the key to our survival. Mankind is faced with a choice: either save the environment or perish.

The suffering in Burundi, Somalia, Liberia, Rwanda and Bosnia cannot go unnoticed. The international community can do much more to help the dispossessed and the hungry of these troubled lands. After all, should we not be our brother's keeper?

I come from a small but proud country. Our people believe in industry and hard work. The banana industry is the mainstay of our economy. But our very existence is under serious threat from forces larger and more powerful than ourselves. I speak not in anger, only in pain and helplessness. How else can we feel when those who have the capacity to help us seek our destruction? If the forces of indifference and greed were to succeed, our society would be thrown out of gear and the democracy which we so cherish will go up in flames.

Our entire population has been sensitized to our banana woes and the people have vented their frustration by writing thousands of letters to those who may hold the key to our survival. We wish to thank all those who have come to our assistance, be they in Europe or elsewhere, and we sincerely hope that they will continue to lend a helping hand.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is deeply concerned about the use of illegal drugs and drug trafficking. The magnitude of this problem transcends national boundaries and calls for increased cooperation on a multilateral level. The influence of the drug barons runs very deep. Sometimes they take on the characteristics of power elites. We firmly believe that renewed international efforts can go a long way towards the eradication of this menace, which contaminates both body and mind.

While we welcome the recent elections in Bosnia, we are troubled by developments in the Persian Gulf. We sincerely hope that the situation will normalize itself as soon as possible, since an escalation of the crisis would be of benefit to no one.

The Middle East is another area of concern. We hope that the recent peace talks between the Israelis and the Palestine Liberation Organization will bear fruit. Much has been achieved over the past two decades and it is expected that the next century will bring peace to the troubled people of these ancient lands.

I now turn my attention to the vexing question of the resumed participation of the Republic of China on Taiwan in the United Nations. This founding member of the United Nations has been excluded from this body for a quarter of a century. How does one reconcile this with the principles of parallel representation of States and of universality? It is time for the Republic of China on Taiwan to be readmitted to this body. In our view, the country not only possesses the attributes of nationhood, but it is well endowed to contribute to the development of Member States of this body. Its economic success is a model for developing countries. The country has also made democratic strides. I wish through this forum to congratulate the Republic of China on Taiwan on the holding of its first direct presidential election. It is really a triumph of the democratic process. All States have not embraced this process.

Despite the adoption and entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we are shocked by the incidence of gross violations of the fundamental rights of the child. Sexual abuse, prostitution and child labour are but a few of the problems that dehumanize our children. My delegation joins in the call for measures to be taken, not only for the universal ratification of the Convention, but also for the effective implementation of this instrument.

There has been much discussion about the reform of the Security Council. Brilliant ideas have been put forward from all quarters. Our own view is that the Security Council must be restructured to reflect an equitable geographic distribution. After all, big Powers do not have a monopoly on knowledge or truth. And in this body, all nations should be treated as equals.

History has saddled the United Nations with a heavy burden of responsibility and, as we look towards the twenty-first century, we must seize every opportunity to achieve the goals and ideals enshrined in the Charter. There is a great deal to be done in the area of social and economic development, but we can do it once we have the political will and the unity of purpose.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister of Works, Communication and Information of the Gambia, His Excellency Mr. Ebrima Ceesay.

Mr. Ceesay (Gambia): I should like first of all to congratulate Mr. Razali Ismail wholeheartedly on his assumption of the presidency of this session. His close association with the United Nations during these years as his country's representative makes him not only highly qualified for the office but also fully cognizant of the activities, including the needs and challenges, of this, our great Organization. I would assure him of my delegation's support at all times.

In the same vein, I should like to extend appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, who worked tirelessly to ensure that the work of the Assembly was both effective and successful. My delegation's thanks and gratitude also go to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for the successful holding of this session in the face of serious financial and other constraints, and for the selfless service he is rendering to our Organization. The quality of his work, as well as his untiring efforts to revitalize our 50-year-old Organization, deserve our full and collective support and encouragement. The Gambia remains committed to the Organization of African Unity's (OAU) declaration of support for His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali to continue in office as Secretary-General for a second term.

Last year, when the delegation of the Gambia addressed the Assembly, we dwelt at length on the twin democratization and development processes in the Gambia. It is fitting today to report on the progress made so far and the successes achieved. Concerning the democratization process, I am pleased to inform this gathering that we successfully conducted a referendum on 8 August 1996 to adopt a new Constitution, and we elected a new President on 26 September 1996. These two activities have been characterized by a high sense of political maturity and civic interest and a high level of voter turnout.

The Constitution was adopted by a vote of 270,093 in favour against 113,744 opposed, with a total turnout of 86.9 per cent for the referendum. Not only is this new Constitution the best we have ever had, but it also embraces the people's political expectations for the advent of a true sense of justice and fair play as well as their deep love of freedom, respect for human rights, and a strong nationalistic feeling predicated on a desire to associate with the rest of the world on a free and equitable basis. Furthermore, the new Constitution ensures that the Second Republic will progress and flourish under the universally respected principles of transparency, accountability and probity — a *sine qua non* for any honest and well-meaning Government. The presidential election, the penultimate phase of our two-year transitional programme, was held on 26 September 1996. Four political parties presented candidates, and His Excellency Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, leader of the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC), emerged as the winner. The President-elect polled 220,011 votes, or about 56 per cent of the total votes cast. This resounding victory indicates a strong endorsement by the Gambian people of the policies of the now-dissolved Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC). The distribution of the results and the actual percentages of the votes captured by the respective candidates depict an election that was free and fair — free from the obvious abuses of the position of incumbency.

In keeping with the APRC's philosophy of national unity, the President-elect has extended a message of peace and reconciliation to all Gambians. In his address to the nation on 27 September 1996, following the presidential election, he said:

> "In democratic elections no voters lose, since the outcome is the collective will of all."

He invited all Gambians, irrespective of political conviction or affiliation, to come together and work for the development of the country. In concluding the democratization process, the Gambia will hold its National Assembly elections on 11 December 1996. Both the Government and the Provisional Independent Electoral Commission attach a great deal of importance to these elections and have therefore been encouraging interested parties and individuals to contest for seats in the National Assembly. We have no doubt that the peace and orderliness that characterized the referendum and presidential election will prevail in the forthcoming elections.

It is noteworthy that the electoral process in the Gambia has been complemented by the Government's priority development projects. During the last two years, the Government demonstrated to the whole world that an important ingredient of national development is the commitment and honesty of a Government in implementing realistic programmes for the benefit of its people. In the education sector, several primary, junior

and secondary schools were built and a university extension programme launched. In the area of communication, the country's first-ever television station was commissioned, and the international airport was expanded and modernized. Generally, there has been significant improvement and expansion of the country's road network to ease the chronic transportation problems. In the health sector, the Government has built a third referral hospital, and more doctors and nurses have been recruited from inside and outside the country. As regards the agricultural sector, mechanization has received greater attention as a step towards achieving food self-sufficiency. In short, more has been achieved in all sectors of the economy during the two years of AFPRC rule than during the 30 years of the previous regime.

The resilience of the Gambian economy during the last two years — in spite of the unjustified sanctions imposed on the Gambia by our development partners for purely political reasons, and in the face of other powerful external shocks deriving mainly from trends in the global economy and in world trade — has been reassuring. The Government's macroeconomic policies and development efforts have helped to create an enabling environment for private investment, including foreign direct investment. In effect, the country's economic and financial performance during the 1995-96 year showed real gross domestic product growing by 3 per cent. The projections for 1996-97 are for it to grow by 3.5 per cent, with inflation limited to 5 per cent.

As we forge ahead, we in the Gambia are proud of our Government and its laudable achievements since it took over the reins of power on 22 July 1994. We have learned the true meaning of democracy: an amicable partnership between people and Government. It is through such a partnership that the Civic Education Programme was successful and that Vision 2020 — a national strategy for socio-economic development, aimed at raising the standard of living of the Gambian population — was launched.

I should like at this stage to express the sincere gratitude of the Government and people of the Gambia for the support and assistance received from some members of the international community during the critical period of the transition programme. We fervently hope that this support from our friends and well-wishers will continue to enable us successfully to conduct the National Assembly Elections on 11 December 1996. With the successful end of the two-year transition programme and the peaceful return of our country to democratic civilian rule, we also expect that the international community will now join us in our pursuit to achieve sustainable development.

The recently concluded United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in Istanbul will go down in history as one of the most successful international conferences organized by the United Nations. The Habitat Agenda, adopted by the Conference, reflects generally the acute shortage of shelter and the growing international concern for more and better shelter. Adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlement development in an urbanizing world remain basic human needs and a universal concern. In fact, the statement by the Secretary-General of Habitat II, Mr. Wally N'Dow, that

> "Istanbul will be the gateway to development into the next century",

will hold true well into the twenty-first century. The commitment of the Government of the Gambia to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda — including the Global Plan of Action and, in particular, the forging of sustainable partnerships with all actors in the field of human settlements — remains high.

The mid-term review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s in September 1996 provided an opportunity to review progress in Africa's development. The review reaffirmed the New Agenda as a fundamental and achievable programme for the socio-economic development of Africa, if both Africa and its development partners adhere to the programme's stated responsibilities and commitments. The review revealed the gradual but encouraging growth of the African economy, with an increased gross domestic product (GDP) of 2.3 per cent in 1995, as compared to 2.1 per cent in 1994. The implementation of the New Agenda, however, continues to be constrained by failure to achieve the United Nations target of devoting 0.7 per cent of the GDP of developed countries, including 0.15 per cent of their GNP, for overseas development assistance to the least developed countries.

Africa's huge external debt burden, which grew at an average annual rate of 1.5 per cent between 1990 and 1995, remains the single most serious constraint to Africa's consistent economic recovery and sustainable development. Major donors, creditors and the international community should collectively devise a multilateral debt-

relief programme aimed at completely writing off the debt of developing countries by the turn of the century. The implementation of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa alongside the New Agenda, and in collaboration with the Bretton Woods institutions and other agencies, will constitute a new and dynamic global approach of working with Africa to accelerate its development. The attainment of the objectives of the Special Initiative within a decade will depend to a large extent on the availability of new and additional funds, rather than on the reprioritizing of programmes and remarshalling of funds identified under the New Agenda. Only in this way can the international community realize — as the President of the World Bank, Mr. Wolfensohn, said in connection with the launching of the Special Initiative — that

> "there is a need for us to give the push, that help, the assistance which can keep the momentum".

Globalization continues to hold much attraction, but its benefits continue to elude the majority of developing countries. The impact of globalization and liberalization on employment and sustainable socio-economic development in general has been negative. The recent Ninth Meeting of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in South Africa, while reaffirming the international community's commitment to partnership for development, recognized the disparities among nations as well as the need to help developing countries reap the benefits of globalization and development and to ensure their full and effective participation in the world economy on an equitable basis.

The case of the least developed countries has always received the attention and support of the international community, particularly through the adoption of the Paris Declaration and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s. The mid-term global review of this Programme of Action, held in September 1995, failed to confirm the realization of the programme's primary objective, which is to arrest and reverse the deterioration in the socio-economic situation in the least developed countries and to revitalize their growth and development. It is noted that the lack of progress in improving the socio-economic performance of LDCs is attributable, in the main, to the failure of the international community to provide the necessary support and assistance through official development assistance, debt relief and benefits from globalization and liberalization. The success of the Programme of Action during the second half of its existence will depend to a large measure on the amount of international support for the economic growth of least developed countries.

The attainment of international peace and security remains a vital aspect of our Organization's work. It is for these reasons that my delegation joins the international community in supporting the United Nations effort to ensure peace and the resolution of conflicts throughout the world. In this regard, the set-back in the peace process evidenced by the upheaval of April 1996 in Liberia was of great concern to the international community. However, thanks to the ceaseless efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), especially through its Committee of Nine on Liberia, the peace process is back on track, and so far there has been satisfactory progress on its implementation. In spite of the difficulties encountered over the past few years in the implementation of the Abuja Agreement, it is still our firm belief that the Agreement remains the best framework for restoring durable peace to Liberia. With the genuine commitment and goodwill of all parties and the continued support of the international community, especially the United Nations, I am confident that a lasting solution will soon be found.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina gives some hope that the brokered peace will continue to hold. The elections of 14 September 1996 and the new federal Government which has been created should hopefully lead to national unity and reconciliation.

It is sad to note that the civil war in Somalia, after simmering down for some time, has suddenly flared up again. The renewed fighting has put a great deal of strain on the peace process. The efforts of the Organization of African Unity and of the international community in general to contain hostilities and restore peace, security and stability continue to receive our fullest support.

The dramatic deterioration of the situation in Burundi is a major source of concern for all peace-loving people the world over. We are indeed saddened by the spate of ethnic killings in this country, which continue to claim many innocent lives. It is our collective responsibility to put an end to this sorry state of affairs and thus avert a replay of the tragic events that occurred in neighbouring Rwanda some two years ago. In this regard, we continue closely to monitor the evolution of the political situation in Burundi and hope that peace, security and order will be permanently restored. We

therefore strongly support the OAU peace initiatives, in particular the Mwanza peace process and the Arusha peace initiative, aimed at guaranteeing security and democracy for all people in Burundi.

The peace dividend so far achieved in our search for a lasting peace in the Middle East should not be allowed to fade away. Rather, we should continue to pursue the peace process in order to achieve a lasting peace in the region on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The quest for peace is a universal concern of the international community. At the same time, the desire for equality and recognition continues to elude some nations. The Republic of China on Taiwan's quest for recognition and readmission into the United Nations has failed to have the necessary impact on the attitude and goodwill of the international community. Today, the Republic of China on Taiwan stands very high in the international arena in the field of economic growth and social development. It is noted not only for its economic achievements, but also for its exemplary political reform. The direct election of its President on 23 March 1996, an event unprecedented in Chinese history, marked the culmination of Taiwan's political democratization. This accomplishment ought to be recognized by the United Nations, in accordance also with the principle of universality. My country believes that the precedent of parallel United Nations membership, which applied to the former East Germany and West Germany and currently applies to North Korea and South Korea, should be applied in the case of the Republic of China on Taiwan.

Besides the membership factor, which is in accordance with Article 4 of the United Nations Charter, there is a justice factor relating to Articles 1 and 2 of the same Charter. It is regrettable that this factor was not included in our debate when the matter was considered at the meeting of the General Committee of the General Assembly, held on 18 September 1996, in connection with the item on the draft agenda entitled "Consideration of the exceptional situation of the inability, resulting from General Assembly resolution 2758 (XXVI), of the 21.3 million people on Taiwan, Republic of China, to participate in the activities of the United Nations". As we all know, one can quantify numbers of signatures, but not emotions — that is, sympathy with and an interest and belief in the justification and rightness of the case of Taiwan. It is our conviction that the parallel participation of the two sides of the Taiwan strait in the United Nations and other international organizations would be conducive to the maintenance of peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region and in the world in general. Let us therefore give the Republic of China on Taiwan the opportunity to share with us their capabilities and experience in a collective effort to realize humankind's hope for the equitable development of every region of the world.

The practice of the unilateral imposition of an economic embargo against one Member State by another Member State should have ceased with the end of the cold-war era. For more than three decades now, Cuba has struggled, against all odds, to survive economically and financially. With patience and determination, Cuba has continued to make great strides towards socio-economic development. Indeed, among the family of nations, it has excelled in some activities of common benefit to humankind, such as genetic engineering and modern medicine. These laudable achievements and progress made by Cuba deserve to be encouraged.

The application of the principles of international law and the effort of the international community to propagate peace and security should be all-embracing. In this connection, as regards Libya's alleged complicity in the downing over Lockerbie, Scotland, of Pan Am flight 103, we support the OAU resolution adopted by the sixty-fourth session of the Council of Ministers in Yaoundé from 1 to 5 July 1996, as a basis for overcoming the present impasse on the issue.

Concerning the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, we would like to urge the international community not to relent in its efforts to find a just and peaceful settlement to the dispute in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. The Gambia reaffirms its commitment to the international community's resolve to combat naked aggression, particularly between States, and international terrorism from whatever quarter. Pursuant to the relevant Security Council and Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) resolutions, we support the efforts of Kuwait to preserve and defend its territorial integrity while seeking a just and speedy redress to the consequences of the Iraqi invasion.

Last year we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. The occasion afforded us the opportunity to review the operations and mandate of the Organization. The ongoing exercise of strengthening the United Nations system is complementing this review and the rededication to the ideals of the United Nations. In particular, we should give our full support to the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and

the Economic and Social Council, and to the reform of the Security Council — including the question of equitable representation of all geographical regions on this important organ of the United Nations. The proposals for the reform of the Security Council made by the African Group and Italy, among others, should also be given due consideration. The reform of the Security Council should ensure that the hegemonistic interests of a few will not be promoted to the detriment of the majority.

The reforms of the United Nations put in sharp focus the present financial crisis of the Organization and the gallant efforts of the Secretary-General to improve its financial situation. The serious consideration the General Assembly has given this matter since 1994, leading to its setting up a High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations, once more demonstrates Member States' commitment to the preservation and continued operations of the Organization. The cumulative effect of the financial reforms, including the huge staff reductions, should, as much as possible, neither compromise the efficiency and productivity of the Organization nor deflect it from its traditional operations and renewed mandate. The Organization's precarious financial situation is our collective concern, and we should therefore resolutely strive to ensure that it is promptly addressed. This of course requires that all Member States have the clear political will to pay their contributions punctually. Member countries should desist from withholding their contributions for purely political considerations, as this would paralyse the functioning of the United Nations.

It is fitting at this juncture to refer to the work of this body in pursuing the objectives of the Agenda for Peace and the Agenda for Development. The search for a common basis for international cooperation on conflict resolution, relief operations and development remains an active agenda of the United Nations. The success of any international cooperation on these issues would require greater focus on the effective implementation of the development priorities of developing countries. The link between peace and development is not only essential but forms part of the United Nations Charter. The two serve as twin pillars of the international community's effort to achieve universal peace and security based on the promotion of the social and economic development of all peoples. We remain fully committed to their effective realization.

The manifold problems of illicit drug trafficking and abuse are becoming increasingly universal. In many respects, both producer and non-producer nations are rapidly falling victim to the pernicious effects of illicit drugs. Today countries that once were drug free are either gradually becoming infested with the sale and use of illicit drugs or are being made transit posts in the illicit trafficking of narcotics and psychotropic substances. For many years now, the United Nations has led a steady, all-embracing fight against the global drug menace, especially through its International Drug Control Programme and Global Programme of Action, and, recently, by making drugs the subject of the 1996 high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council session. The effort of the United Nations in combating the trafficking and sale of illicit drugs cannot succeed unless the international community lends it its full support through improved and effective international cooperation in drug control. The Gambia will continue to participate in any international effort to combat and defuse the global drug menace. At the national level, appropriate organs and control measures have been put in place to discourage the use of the Gambia as a transit post in the illicit global drug trade and to save Gambians from falling victim to its harmful effects.

In the area of nuclear disarmament, it is gratifying to note that the General Assembly recently adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. That endorsement by the international community should not, however, overlook the legitimate concerns and reservations expressed by India.

The convening of the World Food Summit next month in Rome to address hunger and food security provides the opportunity to renew the international community's commitment to the eradication of hunger and malnutrition and the attainment of food security for all.

The linkage between the problem of food security and poverty cannot be overemphasized. The Gambia, within the framework of the United Nations Development Programme and in observance of the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty (1996), has been participating effectively in the fight against poverty. National programmes have been designed and put in place to achieve poverty eradication.

The last decade of the twentieth century has witnessed some landmark activities in international cooperation. The series of United Nations global conferences signifies the international community's

preoccupation with the preservation of international peace and security, the promotion and preservation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the propagation of development techniques and the attainment of sustainable development, the provision of adequate shelter for our rapidly growing population and, indeed, the attempt to ensure the social and economic well-being of all peoples all over the world.

The Gambia is proud to be associated with this international crusade for a secure and better life for every human being.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Chairman of the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda, on whom I now call.

Mr. Lewis (Antigua and Barbuda): It is with profound pleasure that I salute the President, a diplomat of experience and stature and one worthy to preside over the functions of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. I wish to recall that it was his country and mine that brought the question of Antarctica to the United Nations, and our countries have worked closely together for a number of years. We have made progress as countries from various parts of the world have joined us in an effort to preserve Antarctica as the last natural heritage of mankind. His country's efforts in regard to the betterment of the global community are deeply admired by my countrymen, and it is with a sense of genuine cordiality that we refer to Malaysia as a friendly and brotherly country. Permit me also to extend sincere thanks to the outgoing President, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, who so ably led the historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

On 7 July of this year Hurricane Bertha passed perilously close to Antigua and Barbuda, and our twin-island State sustained some damage. Small island developing States like ours are subject to various natural disasters — earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and hurricanes. In 1974, we experienced an earthquake that measured 7.8 on the Richter scale and caused considerable destruction. A volcano on the island of Montserrat, some 50 kilometres from our shores, has been active for the past 15 months. Our people live in constant fear of fall-out and tidal waves from a major eruption.

The natural phenomenon presently plaguing Montserrat could be a prelude to a disaster that can destroy small islands globally. Evidence of the warming of the planet has clearly emerged, and extreme weather events have become more frequent and intense. Last year, Hurricane Luis unleashed its fury on our country for 48 hours and was declared to have been the worst storm of the century. Hurricane Marilyn followed in its wake, intensifying the damage. Indeed, we remain grateful to the countries and institutions that provided various forms of assistance to help in the reconstruction.

In addressing the General Assembly of the Organization of American States this year, our envoy noted that development is not sustainable if a score of storms and hurricanes are to trample through our region each year. Carbon dioxide emissions caused by the burning of petroleum, coal, wood and gas since the start of the Industrial Revolution in western Europe 200 years ago have begun to place the survival of small islands in jeopardy. Harmful production, wasteful consumption and dangerous disposal patterns continue to characterize the behaviour of the largest industrialized States. We must therefore reduce carbon dioxide emissions to the agreed Toronto targets. Together, let us address the challenge so that we may bequeath to future generations a better and a safer world than we inherited. Our demise will only signal the beginning of the end of a marvellous civilization, more creative and more inventive than any that has gone before.

Between 1 and 15 July Antigua and Barbuda played its part at the human settlement Conference, Habitat II, at Istanbul, and we urge that the Istanbul Declaration and Plan of Action be adhered to. It must be recognized that it is in the cities and towns of the new urban world, where most of us will ultimately live and work, that most economic activity will take place and goods be produced. It is where most pollution will be generated and national resources consumed, with an impact felt far beyond city limits. Moreover, it will be in the cities and towns of this urban world that growing social tensions and conflict, rooted in poverty and the maldistribution of resources, will be resolved, and where the key to true human security will be found.

The problems of urbanization are not limited to the more endowed countries. We too, despite our small size, have to cope with the varying patterns and outcomes that demand responses that have at times threatened to overwhelm us. Nevertheless, I am happy to report that in Antigua and Barbuda we have made considerable progress towards control and adequate regulation.

Under the guidance of the Development Control Authority and the Central Housing and Planning Authority major initiatives have been undertaken, with assistance from the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements and the United Nations Development Programme. The Government, in partnership with other sectors of society, is playing a multiple role in improving living and working conditions on an equitable basis to enable all its citizens to enjoy adequate shelter, affordable basic services and sustainable human settlements.

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda not only performs the functions of a national policy-maker and housing administrator, but also serves in the capacity of lender and developer. In those roles, it has ensured that interest rates are kept at reasonable levels and that repayment periods for loans are as long as 20 years. In its regulatory role, the Government of the Labour Party has put forward development standards, stipulated building procedures and integrated land and shelter policies with programmes for reducing poverty and assuring employment, for environmental protection, for improvement in education and health, and for providing clean water and sanitation facilities.

This is indeed a strange and puzzling world. With reference to sustainable development, a myth has gathered momentum that maintains that the developing world is making significant forward strides. World Bank data, however, demonstrate that over 60 per cent of the countries in which the United Nations and other bodies have development assistance operations have witnessed declines in real per capita income over the decade ending in 1994.

James Gustave Speth, the Special Coordinator for Economic and Social Development, in a forceful and moving presentation at the opening of the 1996 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, noted two major ironies of the current situation. He declared that now that the world is freed from distorting effects on development cooperation, just when the development assistance community has learned so much more about how to succeed and do its job well, just when the needs of the developing world are growing rapidly and dramatically — just at this precise time, the resources that are needed for development cooperation are shrinking rapidly and dramatically. In the past four years, real development assistance has declined by 20 to 25 per cent.

The other irony is that just when there is a better understanding of the essential links between peace and development cooperation, just when the United Nations is called upon to assume much greater responsibilities in the follow-up to conferences and in post-conflict peace-building and other areas, just when the United Nations is reforming and strengthening itself to do these things, the Organization finds itself threatened by a financial crisis that afflicts both its assessed and its voluntary contributions. Indeed, Speth sees the above as not only ironies, but as tragedies of our era.

This, the major international Organization, is restructuring itself and endeavouring to undertake meaningful reform. While it may be true that the existing financial crisis is primarily a crisis of payment, there is no denying the fact that there is unnecessary waste being generated here, whether in regard to the duplication of work detail, the excessive copying of documents, the scheduling of numerous meetings destined to accomplish nothing or to a myriad of other undesirables. Financial concerns are not, however, the only issue of which the world body is seized. Reform is being undertaken in a multi-pronged manner, which in itself will be a long process that can be justified in a Benthamite way by emphasizing the greatest good for the greatest number.

At present, even though the discussions have been considered to have made progress, there is not even the glimmer of a discernible outcome in regard to the "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters". Although consensus exists on expanding the Council, the manner in which that can be achieved equitably remains to be resolved. Antigua and Barbuda is firm in its declared position that any expansion should include developing countries and that both the African and the Latin American and Caribbean Groups should be represented. Similarly, Antigua and Barbuda would like to see certain restrictions placed on the use of the veto. We understand that all efforts at restructuring and reform in the United Nations, however, should be focused on economic growth and development.

In this whole process of misunderstandings, the regional commissions are being placed under attack through cut-backs and in some instances calls for their dissolution. This is particularly hard on those of us who are being served by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). We see ECLAC as a regional organization that has already reformed itself and should not be penalized by calls for further reforms. ECLAC has rendered valuable service through

subprogrammes on economic development, social development, international trade, development financing and transport, industrial, agricultural, and technological modernization, environment, natural resources and human settlements, statistics and economic projections, the integration of women into development, regional integration and cooperation, economic and social planning and population. In all of these fields, ECLAC collaborates with the Governments of the Americas in the investigation and analysis of public policy, provides technical assistance and training, and promotes regional cooperation.

For those of us in the Caribbean it is imperative that ECLAC be fully sustained to continue to assist us in these and other areas. This is set against the backdrop of the pressures that are being brought to bear on the Caribbean region, which Prime Minister Lester Bird described at the meeting of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on 6 July. He spoke of the right-wing voices that are ready to impose upon the States of the Caribbean Community a new colonialism under a variety of guises, such as those of limited sovereignty and extraterritoriality. Indeed, the very economic survival of some Caribbean States is threatened as a result of pressures brought against countries whose sustenance depends almost entirely upon the production of a yellow fruit.

Most of the countries affected by the banana dispute are former European colonies, and the continuation of their historic access to European markets is crucial to their economic survival. Without some form of protection, the banana industry in the CARICOM States would collapse, leading to severe social dislocation that would ultimately manifest itself in political catastrophe.

Recognizing the significance of banana production to some of our economies, the European Union has a programme in which a small portion of its market is reserved for Caribbean producers, a portion that is less than 10 per cent. This has certainly not been a major problem for the big companies, for a handful of multinational concerns still controls 60 per cent of the European market and 70 per cent of the overall market. However, it appears that Bob Herbert, in an editorial of 13 May, was correct when he asserted:

> "for the multinationals, enough is never enough". (*The New York Times, 13 May 1996, Section A, p. 15*)

Indeed, for countries where literacy rates are in the ninetieth percentile and where political prisoners are unheard of, it would be disastrous if the economies of their societies were to be destroyed through the destruction of the banana industry.

The bleakness of the aforementioned situation is, however, offset by the ideas expressed at the Tokyo Conference on Development Strategy in March of this year, where it was posited that there is the will to sustain a new global partnership and make it effective. There was consensus that the issues that stretched beyond mathematical economics, that is, issues such as those incorporating poverty, the environment, the advancement of women and food security, had to be tackled at both the national and international levels.

It was nonetheless brought out that many developed countries are experiencing harsh financial difficulties that are imposing severe limits on their capacity to contribute to the international organizations. Thus, the nations of the world had first to respond to the challenge of poverty by striving for its eradication. Secondly, the key to success clearly lies in nations working together to build and implement a development strategy to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. Thirdly, in the process of working out and implementing a new development strategy, it is crucially important to reinvigorate the roles of the international organizations, and in particular that of the United Nations.

Of significant concern to developing countries was the statement that in efforts to secure sufficient resources it is important to take steps in other policy areas such as trade or technological transfer. In addition, the globalization of the world economy makes it important to promote the development of human resources and the capacity for institution-building in developing countries. In its Human Development Report 1996, the United Nations Development Programme acknowledged that, although some countries are experiencing unprecedented economic growth, the quality of human development does not always reflect that progress. While many countries of the developing world are struggling with the implications of trade liberalization and globalization, individuals within these societies are faced with a complementary struggle. The sad fact is that as long as selective liberalization between countries remains, individuals within countries will find it more difficult to escape the downward spiral into the depths of poverty. It hardly takes a stretch of the imagination to recognize, therefore, that an early investment in building human capacity is incumbent upon

any society wishing to achieve economic and social development that is both equitable and sustainable.

While it can truly be said that the 1990s signalled the end of the cold war and witnessed the dissolution of a bipolar world, the conflicts we are witnessing today are localized and appear to be gathering momentum as a result of ethnic, religious and civil considerations. There is clearly an upsurge of micronationalism, which fosters separatist considerations. There is much social disruption, mass starvation and the spread of contagious diseases. Of an extremely frightening nature is the fact that access to victims is often rendered difficult or impossible. There is clearly a deepening lack of security for relief personnel and supplies. Clearly, there is a need for the demobilization of paramilitary groups, for demining and for an intensification of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building.

It must be recalled that the United Nations came into existence to ensure peace among nations. With that in mind, we should be prepared to take steps beyond a Non-Proliferation Treaty and a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and move towards the elimination of weapons of mass destruction within a time-bound framework.

Responses to the myriad of desperate problems have to be interdisciplinary in nature, for there is no single United Nations agency that can control, pacify, and rehabilitate effectively.

Recognizing the dangers of increased international criminal activity in the region, Antigua and Barbuda is working with its neighbours and expects to receive additional assistance from bilateral and multilateral sources to initiate a national drug and money-laundering control policy. Priorities of the policy include legislative and regulatory reform, increased interdiction activities, technical training, preventive health and public education and training. Given its multidimensional nature, the drug problem is one that the United Nations system is particularly well equipped to address.

However, working alone, the Organization is helpless to tackle this scourge that cuts across all sectors of society, impacting on families, health and economic activity. There needs to be greater coordination among nations if the blight of narcotics is to be tackled in a meaningful way. Strong and determined efforts within certain countries will be seriously undermined if there is not a united global approach to manifestations and practices that will destroy not only the fabric of our societies but the lives of countless individuals.

The plague of terrorism must be controlled. The appeals of two South Asian nations to have an international convention against terrorism must be heeded. Often, terrorism is linked to narcotics. Not only do the States of the eastern Caribbean have fears of subversion, they are also concerned by the intense violations of ports and harbours and the corresponding graft as their countries serve as transit points.

In concluding, I would like to say that as the representatives of the global community we have to live up to the trust placed in us by our constituencies. Multilateralism must be paramount as we strive toward ways and means for better management of our planet. We must agree on common values for common survival. Our constituents are calling for an end to senseless violence and for the re-emergence of concepts of compassion and equity. They are asking for our dialogue to be creative and forward-looking.

The peoples of different regions must be prepared to make sacrifices and to suppress the barriers that divide — barriers such as hatred, selfishness and bitterness. Let us not forget the words of Philip Vundla, an executive of the African National Congress, who said:

> "What you achieve by violence, you will need greater violence to maintain. Those who say the answer is bloodshed have other people's blood in mind, not their own."

However, the fundamental need in regard to advancement remains that of economic reality. Michel Camdessus of the International Monetary Fund reminded the leaders of the G-7 countries on 24 June that:

> "Too many refusals to grant development assistance have the alibi that such funds are wasted. This slippage, as well as the so-called donor fatigue, must be vigorously combated if the international community wishes to be in a position to keep the poorest countries from marginalization and to steer the world away from the tensions and crises that extreme poverty cannot but engender whenever it occurs. Marginalization is not inevitable, and every country has its opportunity in this globalized world."

My country recognizes the fact that we are in an era of unprecedented change and opportunity, a period in which scientific developments and technological achievements seem almost miraculous and offer an improved quality of life. The United Nations should become embedded in reality and push the critical issues involving destitution and social injustice to the centre of both national and public debate.

Antigua and Barbuda takes pride in and cherishes the United Nations and we believe that it has been judged, unjustly, more by its failures than by its successes. But the work done in regard to health, human rights, peacekeeping activities, disaster mitigation and assistance to developing countries presents an enviable record.

The United Nations has the capacity for achievements in areas beyond the reach of national or regional authorities. Subsequently, the nations that comprise this body must redouble their collective commitment to translating vision into reality. In this way, we will thrust the United Nations manfully forward into the dawning twenty-first century.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

Two delegations have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to 5 minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Kebede (Ethiopia): It was not my delegation's intention to speak at this juncture. My delegation regrets that the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sudan referred in his policy statement to an issue of which the Security Council is seized and with regard to which the Council has adopted successive resolutions, which, regrettably, the Government of Sudan continues to defy today.

The points to which the Foreign Minister of Sudan attempted specifically to draw the Assembly's attention are part and parcel of the public relations exercise pursued by Sudan. That exercise is not relevant, nor do the facts lend credibility to what he attempted to portray.

In its relations with all its neighbours, the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia pursues a policy of good-neighbourliness based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and non-interference in their internal affairs. In light of those cardinal principles, the Government of Ethiopia has taken several practical measures it feels can play a pivotal role in fostering all-round cooperation in the region. However, this constructive policy has been frustrated and our political commitment to working for a better future has been misused by the Sudanese authorities for their own purposes.

The Sudanese Government abused the prerogative of a sovereign State by issuing Sudanese passports, both diplomatic and regular, to help non-Sudanese terrorists travel freely to Ethiopia. It used its national carrier to transport terrorists. It made and continues to make financial resources and sanctuary available to terrorists and provided the very weapon used to commit the cowardly act.

The fact that the Sudanese authorities were involved in the failed attempt on the life of the Egyptian President on 26 June 1995 in Addis Ababa and that they continue to obstruct justice by sheltering the terrorists wanted in connection with the assassination attempt is as clear as day and does not require illustration at this stage.This has been clearly recognized in all relevant decisions of the Organization of African Unity and in the three resolutions of the Security Council adopted on the matter.

The assertion that evidence and information relating to the suspects was not provided to the authorities of the Sudan is devoid of truth. The Sudanese Government was provided with pertinent facts and evidence, including names, nationalities and known addresses of the terrorists. The claim of the Government of the Sudan that it has tried to locate the three culprits has no credibility. Sudanese authorities were aware of the location of the three before, during and after the assassination attempt, as well as when extradition requests from Ethiopia were received.

The evidence gleaned from those apprehended and the material evidence attest beyond the shadow of a doubt not only to the involvement of the Sudanese authorities, but also to the fact that they provided shelter and sanctuary to the three terrorists sought in connection with the assassination attempt.

Regarding the trials of the three suspects in Ethiopia, it should be pointed out that it is quite common for domestic legislation, including constitutions, to provide for circumstances under which trials may be held *in camera*. Moreover, under international law it is

permissible to exclude the public and the press from all or any part of a trial for reasons of national security, public order or morals, when the interests of the personal lives of the parties so require or, in the court's view, where publicity would prejudice the interests of justice. The decision of the Ethiopian court, which is fully in conformity with article 20 of the Ethiopian Constitution, to hold the trial of the three defendants *in camera* is also fully consistent with the standards of international law. In light of the foregoing, my delegation finds outrageous and unacceptable the reference made in the Sudanese statement to the trial of the three terrorists convicted for the crime they committed.

Lastly, we call upon the Government of the Sudan to cease its sponsorship of international terrorism and return to the fold of responsible and law-abiding nations. We also call on the Sudan to hand over the three suspects to Ethiopia and to show its determination and commitment to work for genuine regional economic and political cooperation that could ensure a better future for the peoples of the entire region.

Mr. Eltinay (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The statement by the Minister for External Relations of Sudan before the General Assembly this morning called for cooperation and solidarity. He denounced armed conflict among States and called for non-interference in the internal affairs of States and support for the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

My delegation wishes to respond to the remarks made this afternoon. We did not intend to do so, but the erroneous statements by the representatives of Ethiopia and Eritrea oblige us to do so.

The remarks by the representative of Eritrea take us back to the cold-war era. I would like to ask the representative of Eritrea a question: When did Eritrea achieve its independence? How can he explain his claim that Sudan began its aggressive policy vis-à-vis Eritrea as far back as 1989, when everyone knows that Sudan has provided unlimited support to the Eritrean people for more than 30 years. Indeed, support was given to the current Government in Eritrea for the holding of the referendum on Eritrea's self-determination, which in turn led to its independence in 1993. We provide such assistance to the fraternal people of Eritrea without any expectation of return. This is a brother's duty.

As for the attempts to raise the issue of the refugees to which the Sudan has acted as host for more than 30 years, I would add that, in the interim, some of them have obtained Sudanese nationality. They have shared bread and salt with the Sudanese people and have joined in all aspects of Sudanese society. I do not need to recall here that Eritrea, which refused the return of Eritreans to their homeland after independence on the pretext that it lacked the necessary infrastructure to absorb them — a refusal of which the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is fully aware — cannot admit here that it limits the return of refugees solely to members of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, to the exception of all others. That is a flagrant breach of all norms and rules governing refugees.

The international community has adopted clear rules governing international relations. Any act outside such rules is a breach of international norms and standards. On 10 May 1996, the Eritrean Head of State announced to the international community and media, including the BBC and *The Economist*, his intention to provide unconditional and unlimited armed support to the Sudanese opposition in order to overthrow the Government of the Sudan.

How does the Assembly regard a State that turns over a neighbouring country's embassy to that neighbour's armed opposition? Is this the behaviour of civilized States or is it, rather, behaviour that threatens international peace and security? I would merely recall the information provided to the Security Council by the Sudan with regard to the dispatch of Eritrean forces to attack Sudanese civilians. Killings took place, properties were destroyed and bridges were blown up in the very same area that was, for more than 17 years, a haven for the present leaders of Eritrea.

Now, we have renewed claims against the Sudan. The sole aim of statements made by Eritrea in both the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations, notwithstanding Sudan's unlimited support for Eritrea, is to bite the hand that once fed it. Sudan's efforts to normalize relations between the two countries represent the only element of stability in the region. The aggression against Sudan is a dead end that can serve the interests of neither people, nor those of other peoples in the region.

As for the comments made by the representative of Ethiopia, I should like to state before the Assembly that my country's relations with Ethiopia prior to the

regrettable attempt on the life of the Egyptian President, which was condemned by Sudan along with all the world's States, were normal and excellent. Even 30 days or more after the assassination attempt, relations remained normal. Then we were surprised by a dramatic transformation in Ethiopia's position and its accusations against Sudan. Ethiopia has claimed that such accusations were made by the culprits in their custody, who were then tried *in camera* while the Security Council itself rejected the allegations of the three so-called culprits.

I think we have the right to wonder: Does Sudan, accused of terrorism by people held in custody, not have the right to confront its accusers or to obtain the text of such confessions? Or is the international community not entitled to obtain such texts, given the Security Council's imposition of sanctions against the Sudan on the basis ofthe same allegations? Such questions, I believe, are legitimate ones.

The statement of my Foreign Minister did not exceed the bounds of legitimacy in any way. We believe that the remarks of the representative of Ethiopia with regard to strong evidence against the Sudan to be unfounded. The Security Council never heard one iota of proof of Ethiopia's allegations or their veracity.

The other question I should like to raise with the representative of Ethiopia is the following: Is the fact that Sudan has provided and continues to provide every support to Ethiopia, including the prevention of any act of aggression against it from inside Sudanese territory, not sufficient to ensure Ethiopia's cooperation or at the least the provision of information requested by Sudan regarding the alleged culprits now in Ethiopia, not to mention the OAU request for such information?

The President took the Chair.

Programme of work

The President: I should like to inform members that agenda item 15 (b) entitled, "Election of eighteen members of the Economic and Social Council", will be taken up on Thursday, 31 October, in the morning.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.